



How Do I Fulfill My Purpose?

Work with Faith and Diligence

You are engaged in the work of salvation, assigned to do the Lord’s work under the direction of your mission president. The Lord wants you to watch over the people you minister to with love and great care. Your purpose is to help these people come unto Christ through repentance and baptism. Setting goals and acting on inspired plans based on your goals is central to the work of salvation.

In the Book of Mormon, we learn that the prophet Jacob labored diligently to persuade his people to come unto Christ (see Jacob 1:7). He wrote, “For because of faith and great anxiety, it truly had been made manifest unto us concerning our people, what things should happen unto them” (Jacob 1:5). Jacob received revelation about his people as a result of his faith, great anxiety (meaning in part, great concern or carefulness), and diligence. Similarly, as you set goals and make plans, you can also receive revelation on how to minister to the people you are serving as you act with faith, concern, carefulness, and diligence.

The principles taught in this guide will help you and your companion carry out your work so that:

- Your daily efforts are an exercise of faith in Jesus Christ that are centered on your purpose and directed by the Spirit.
- Your focus is on people and helping as many of them as possible repent and become truly converted to the gospel of Christ.
- You effectively use the gifts, talents, time, and resources (including digital devices and social media) the Lord has given you.

Setting goals and making plans will help you accomplish what the Lord wants you to do—both while serving as a missionary and throughout your life. He expects you to “organize [yourself and] prepare every needful thing” (D&C 88:119) to bless the people you are serving.

Understand the Goal Setting and Planning Process

Following certain guidelines will help you and your companion most effectively plan the work in your area. Use this goal setting and planning process for each individual or family you work with. You can also apply this process to other aspects of your work, such as finding people to teach, strengthening new converts, working with members, learning a new language, or studying the gospel. This process will help you fulfill your missionary purpose. And as you apply these principles in your personal life after your mission, you will be blessed as you make and keep covenants throughout your life.

1. Pray for and seek inspiration.
2. Review progress.
3. Set goals.
4. Make plans.
5. Pray again.

As you strive to carry out your plans and reach your goals, you will regularly give an account to the Lord and mission leaders of your efforts.

Pray for and seek inspiration. Goal setting and planning, if done prayerfully, is a process of receiving revelation. Prayer is an integral part of the process. The Lord promises that He “will lead you along” (D&C 78:18) and “give thee answer to thy prayers” (D&C 112:10). As you pray personally and with your companion, seek inspiration on how you can help people progress. Seek to know the will of Heavenly Father concerning your interactions with each of His children you encounter. Align your will with His as you help accomplish His purpose “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).



Elder D. Todd Christofferson has taught that the work of successfully guiding an investigator through the repentance process begins with one vital step: prayerfully seeking inspiration. The inspiration that comes will determine the course the missionaries should take in each successive step of their planning process. Elder Christofferson said:

“A wise missionary will counsel and pray with his or her companion, seeking inspiration regarding the course of repentance that each investigator should follow. The companionship will plan their teaching accordingly. They will prayerfully determine what invitation or invitations to extend in each contact with the investigator. They will build their lessons around the invitation, identifying the doctrines that the investigator needs to understand in order to accept their invitation. The missionaries will determine how to teach those doctrines to achieve the greatest clarity and conviction for that particular individual. They will plan ways and means for bringing to bear all resources available, including the assistance of members [and the use of technology, such as using text or Facebook

messaging or a videoconferencing app], in helping the investigator keep his or her commitment to act in harmony with the principle or commandment in question. This kind of missionary teaching and testifying is how we conduct an investigator through the process of repentance.”¹

President Henry B. Eyring has also taught, “Missionaries [should] pray over their plans and then depart from their plans as the Spirit leads them.”²

Review progress. As you strive to determine the needs of those you teach, seek to know the will of the Father and pray for His guidance. Do this by reviewing the progress an individual has made in receiving the restored gospel. Discuss with your companion the evidence that he or she is growing in faith, repenting, preparing for baptism and confirmation, or enduring to the end. Immediately after interacting with a person—whether in a lesson, by digital means, or on the street—review with your companion that person’s progress (or lack of progress) in receiving the restored gospel. Do this throughout the day.

Because your time for daily and weekly planning is often limited, focus on the people you are working with in this order:

1. Investigators with a baptismal date this week
2. Investigators with a future baptismal date
3. Investigators who are progressing
4. New investigators
5. Others you are working with

By continually reviewing the progress of those you teach, you will be better able to discern what each person might need to know or do to grow closer to Christ and accept His restored gospel. Identifying an individual’s needs will, in most cases, lead you to create a goal to help him or her.

What if you have few investigators in these five categories or even no investigators? Elder Neil L. Andersen has taught, “If you have few who are progressing, don’t feel sorry for yourself. Find others to teach.”³ For activities in which you might not be focusing on specific individuals, like finding people to teach or working with members, use the step of reviewing progress to discuss how well you are currently doing in that effort.

Set goals. Goals reflect the desires of our hearts and our vision of what we can accomplish. Through making goals and plans, our hopes are transformed into action. Goal setting and planning are acts of faith.

Elder M. Russell Ballard has taught, “Over the years, I have observed that those who accomplish the most in this world are those with a vision for their lives, with goals to keep them focused on their vision and tactical plans for how to achieve them. Knowing where you are going and how you expect to get there can bring meaning, purpose, and accomplishment to life. . . . A goal is a destination or an *end*, while a plan is the route by which you get there. . . . A key to happiness lies in understanding what destinations truly matter—and then spending our time, effort, and attention on the things that constitute a sure way to arrive there.”⁴

Prayerfully set goals that are in harmony with your missionary purpose to invite others to come unto Christ. These carefully considered goals will give you clear direction. Setting purpose-centered goals helps you fill your days with worthwhile activities that help those you teach progress by strengthening their faith in

the Savior; repenting; and preparing for baptism, confirmation, and enduring conversion. Setting challenging goals will help you work effectively and allow you to stretch and grow. Follow these guidelines as you set goals:

- Make sure your goals help you fulfill your missionary purpose.
- As you prayerfully set goals, pay attention to the ideas and impressions that come to you. Record and act on these impressions.
- Focus on people and their spiritual progress first. Focus on how you can help them experience conversion and take the next steps in growing their faith in Jesus Christ, repenting, and preparing for baptism. Then focus on activities such as finding people to teach, working with members, or preparing for meetings.



- Set goals that are specific and realistic (ones that you can act on and accomplish) but at the same time make you stretch and exercise faith.
- Set monthly, weekly, and daily goals. Think at least three months (or two transfers) in advance.
- Review your progress regularly. When you fall short of a goal, evaluate your efforts and make needed changes to accomplish the goal, or modify the goal. Adjust your expectations as appropriate.

As you set goals for those you teach, determine what needs to happen next for each person. In helping people accept and live the doctrine of Christ, it's important to do certain things: find those who are ready to hear the gospel message, teach and bear witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, invite people to repent, and show people why and how they can repent. You also need to invite them to do the things that will bring revelation into their lives (such as reading the Book of Mormon, praying, and attending church) and invite them to keep other commandments, including being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. Each of these activities can be the basis of a goal that you and your companion set. For example, a written goal can be as simple as "Help John and Mary attend sacrament meeting this Sunday." The goal does not necessarily have to be connected to a number.

Some goals will not have a number associated with them but will be measured by your observation and discernment of an individual's progress. Other goals will have a number associated with them and can be easily measured, such as goals measured by the key indicators.

Set goals for every aspect of your proselyting, including working with members. As you set goals, ask how each goal will help someone exercise faith, repent, prepare for baptism (or another applicable gospel ordinance), feel the Holy Ghost, prepare for the temple, or otherwise endure to the end.

As Elder Ballard has counseled, “Each missionary companionship ought to have goals every day, and they ought to work with diligence and with faith that they can reach their goals.”⁵



But remember that achieving the goals you set related to the people you meet and teach depends on their agency. Always respect that agency. Never attempt to force, coerce, or limit the agency of others (see D&C 121:41–44). They are free to accept or reject the message you bring them. Some people may reject your message even when they have received a spiritual witness that it is true. You will be saddened because you love them and want their salvation, but do not become discouraged. Discouragement weakens your faith. Your responsibility is to let people know of the Christlike love you feel for them and to teach the gospel clearly and powerfully by the Spirit.

In addition to goals you set for those you find and teach, you should also set personal goals that help you improve your own discipleship: increasing your gospel knowledge, seeking after necessary gifts of the Spirit, improving your teaching, or if applicable, learning a new language. For example, you might set goals related to working more effectively with members. If you become a trainer, you might set goals related to how you can help your companion to become a successful missionary. If you become a mission leader, you will set district or zone goals that help the missionaries in your charge become better, more productive missionaries.

Make plans. Planning is an eternal principle that has existed since before the world was formed. In the premortal existence, Heavenly Father introduced a plan that would bring about the immortality and eternal life of His children (see Moses 1:39). The Book of Mormon refers to this plan by various titles—the plan of redemption, the plan of salvation, the plan of mercy, the plan of happiness. One of the necessary steps in implementing God’s plan was the Creation of the earth. An account of the Creation found in the book of Abraham reveals that each successive step or phase of creation was carefully planned as the Father had outlined (see Abraham 4). Abraham recounted that “the Gods saw that they would be obeyed, and that their plan was good” (Abraham 4:21).

Their goal was to create an earth. They made specific plans for each day’s activity and carried them out until the goal was completed. Similarly, for each goal you set, you and your companion will create specific plans to accomplish it. We also know that they gave regular reports or accounts of their progress, as missionaries do (see the later section “Give an Account”).

A plan represents what you will do to meet a specific goal. Think through all that needs to be done to accomplish your work and when you will do it. Be creative and seek inspiration. Plans can include invitations you will extend, gospel principles you will help people understand, events that will need to happen, people who will need to be involved, tools and technology you will use, and so forth. As you plan:

- Make sure your plans help you fulfill your missionary purpose.
- Make plans for each goal you set.
- Create plans that are specific and lead you to action.
- Create plans that are simple but still provide enough detail that it is clear what you need to do.
- Consider who will need to do what, and determine when they will need to do it.
- Record the details of your plans in your planning tools.

Elder Ballard has given missionaries this counsel: “The Lord deserves our very best, and we cannot give that to Him without good, careful planning. If you plan well, you will have promptings, elders and sisters, telling you the things you should do, and you’ll have some promptings telling you things you should not do. The power of this work is when we get to the point in our relationships with Heavenly Father that we know the voice of the Spirit, and we know it so well that we know exactly what we should do.”⁶

Focus on Key Indicators for Conversion

Key indicators identify events and conditions that show a person’s progress toward enduring conversion. You will focus on four key indicators as you pray for and seek inspiration, review progress, set goals, make plans, and account for your labors. These four indicators are:

- **Investigators baptized and confirmed:** Each person who receives the ordinances of baptism and confirmation. Report this number for the week the people are confirmed.
- **Investigators with a baptismal date:** Each person who agrees to be baptized on a specific date. (A person who agrees to be baptized but has not committed to a specific baptismal date is not counted for this key indicator.)

Report this number each week starting with the week investigators first make the commitment until the week they are baptized.

- **Investigators who attend sacrament meeting:** Each person you are teaching who attends sacrament meeting. Report the number of people who attend each week.
- **New investigators:** Each new person who has been taught a lesson and has accepted an invitation for you to return to teach him or her more. Report this number for people only for the week in which they first become investigators.

As you pray for and seek inspiration, review progress, set goals, and make plans, ponder your current situation. Then prayerfully consider the time it may take to add to the numbers of people represented by each key indicator. For example, if your ward or branch averages a convert baptism every two months and you typically find two new investigators each week, you will need to continue finding two new investigators each week to continue the current baptismal trend. If you would like to increase convert baptisms to one per month, however, you may need to find four or more new investigators each week. Plan more than a week or a month or even a transfer cycle ahead. Conversion can take time. Expand your horizons and think two or three months out.

Complete Daily and Weekly Planning

The scriptures teach, “Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings” (Alma 37:37). As a missionary you are to counsel continually not only with the Lord but also with your companion. In addition, you have two scheduled opportunities—during daily planning sessions and a weekly planning session—to counsel together as you pray and seek inspiration, set goals, and make plans for the people you are working with.

Daily planning (30 minutes each day). This is a brief session that you will hold usually each morning before you begin your day’s work. Your time for daily planning is brief. Keep that in mind as you prepare for those you teach and as you review activities you have planned for the day. Focus on goals and plans for those you will be visiting that day and perhaps the following day or two. As you plan daily, follow the goal setting and planning process. Read the next section for additional guidelines on how to apply the process to each individual you teach.

Weekly planning (2–3 hours one day each week). You and your companion should hold a weekly planning session on a day and at a time that is less productive for proselyting (often on Thursday morning or Friday morning). Your mission president may identify a day and time that is best for your mission. During weekly planning, follow the goal setting and planning process. Read the next section for additional guidelines on how to apply the process to each individual you teach.

Take a little time in each weekly planning session to consider your key indicator goals for the coming week, the current month, and the next two months. Adjust your monthly goals as necessary. Setting monthly goals and adjusting them as circumstances and inspiration direct allows you to consistently and diligently help more people repent and be baptized.



Use the Goal Setting and Planning Process

In each planning session, follow the goal setting and planning process described earlier. Follow this process one individual at a time as outlined below. Use the questions that follow as a guide, not as a checklist.

- **Pray.** The Lord instructs, “Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (D&C 4:7).
- **Review progress.** Review the progress of each person you are working with, following the order of priority suggested in the “Review progress” section earlier in this guide. (Remember to record this information in the person’s Teaching Record, as appropriate.) As you do, ask questions such as these:
 - How has this investigator’s faith in the Savior grown this week? Is he or she developing “faith unto repentance” (Alma 34:15)? If not, why?
 - Is [name] preparing for baptism and confirmation on a specific date? Is there anything keeping him or her from progressing toward that goal?
 - How are members, including the ward council, helping? If they are not, how can we encourage them to help?
 - Did [name] attend church this week? If not, why?
 - Is he or she praying daily? If not, why?
 - Is he or she reading the Book of Mormon every day? If not, why?
 - Is [name] keeping other commitments we have invited him or her to keep? If not, why?
 - Did we ask [name] about friends or family who might be interested in and benefit from our message? If not, when will we do that?

- **Set goals.** Set goals for the person whose progress you have just reviewed. As you do, discuss questions such as these:
 - What must happen next for [name] to feel and recognize the Holy Ghost, develop faith in Jesus Christ, repent, be baptized and receive the Holy Ghost, or continue to endure to the end?
 - What do we feel Heavenly Father wants to have happen with this person?
 - How does [name] need to repent?
 - What does [name] need to do to prepare for baptism?
 - What doctrine or lesson can we share to help this person grow in his or her faith and live the gospel? How can ward members and the ward council help?
 - What can we do to help [name] have an uplifting experience in sacrament meeting this coming Sabbath?
 - Is [name] consistently reading the Book of Mormon? If not, what things can we do to help?
 - Is he or she receiving revelation through prayer? If not, what things can we do to help?
 - Is [name] keeping other commitments we have invited him or her to keep? If not, what things can we do to help?
 - How can we work with [name] to find new investigators to teach?

Discussing and answering questions like those above can help you to set specific, relevant goals that you can act on.

- **Make plans.** Make simple yet specific plans for each goal you have just set. As you do so, discuss questions such as these:
 - What actions do we or others (such as members) need to take to achieve the goals we have set?
 - When will those actions need to take place?
 - What tools, including the Book of Mormon, teaching pamphlets, social media, online resources, and other resources, could we use to help us achieve our goals?
 - How will we know if we have achieved our goals or not?
 - To whom will we be accountable? How and when will we report our progress?
- **Set goals and make plans to find new investigators and attend events.** As you set goals and make plans for finding new people to teach, discuss questions such as these:
 - What referrals have we received that we have not contacted yet? How and when will we contact them?
 - In working with members (including new converts and less-active members), what can we do to coach them in missionary efforts, help them develop relationships with others, discuss the Church more openly, or invite others in natural ways to learn more?
 - What other finding methods from chapter 9 of *Preach My Gospel* can we apply? How will we apply them? When will we apply them?
 - What events do we have on our schedule for today or this week? (Consider training meetings, ward council, ward activities, and other events.)

- What do we want to have happen as a result of [event]?
- How can we make sure that this event helps us fulfill our purpose?

Near the end of your planning session, go back through all of the individuals you set goals and made plans for. Some goals may not have a number associated with them. As you review goals that are directly related to key indicators for conversion (such as inviting someone to attend church this week), tally up those numbers. Prayerfully determine what your goals will be for these key indicators.

- **Pray again.** The Lord instructs that “you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right” (D&C 9:8). Pray over the goals you have set and the plans you have made. Ask the Lord if they are right. Some people may feel the burning in the bosom mentioned in this verse; others will experience clarity of thought or a feeling of peace. In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord asks, “Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter?” (D&C 6:23). Peace is an important way that you can feel that the plans you have made are appropriate.

Give an Account

Several passages in the scriptures speak of giving an account of what you do as a servant of the Lord. In one such passage the Lord declares, “For it is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his [or her] stewardship, both in time and in eternity” (D&C 72:3). A steward is a person who takes care of the affairs or property of another. Your responsibility is to care for the work of the Lord in your assigned area. If you are a leader, your responsibility is to care both for the missionaries you lead and for the people in your own proselyting area.

As a missionary, you are accountable to the Lord, but you report on your efforts to His authorized representatives—your mission president and the mission leaders he has appointed to be over your area (see D&C 72:5).

Accountability is an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility for your actions and to account for those actions. Accountability is fundamental in God’s eternal plan. You will stand before the Lord at the last day to be judged, or to give an accounting, for what you have done, what you have desired, and what you have become while here on the earth (see Alma 5:15–19; D&C 137:9). On your mission and throughout your life you will have many opportunities to account to the Lord and to His servants for all that He has entrusted you with. There is much you can learn on your mission about accountability that will benefit you throughout your life.

President Thomas S. Monson has taught that “when performance is measured, performance improves. When performance is measured and reported, the rate of improvement accelerates.”⁷ Accountability does not come only at the end of your mission. It influences how you begin your mission, how you think and feel about the responsibility the Lord has given you, and how you approach your work. Cultivate a desire to account for your labor because it can help you to be a better servant of the Lord. This principle of accountability will bless you if you:

- Are motivated to do your best work.
- Feel personally responsible for the sacred trust the Lord has given you (see D&C 82:3).
- Work with faith and diligence to invite others to come unto Christ (see Jacob 1:5, 7).

- Set goals and make plans that you feel are inspired and centered on your purpose.
- Approach your goal setting and planning with the idea that you will account for your efforts to the Lord (through prayer), to your mission leaders, and to ward leaders.
- Respect the agency of others to make their own decisions, but accept full responsibility for your own efforts and never blame others or difficult circumstances for your not making more progress.
- Seek to learn from your leaders. Invite them to suggest ways you can improve.

The attitude you have toward your mission experience, including how you give an account of your efforts, shows your love for Heavenly Father and His Son and your respect for your priesthood leaders. Recognize that the Lord wants to help you accomplish your righteous goals and will bless you as you seek to fulfill your purpose. In your prayers at the end of the day, give the Lord an accounting of your work.

You will also report regularly to ward leaders in such settings as the weekly missionary correlation meeting and ward council.

Similarly, you will account to your mission leaders every week on the progress of those you are teaching. Discuss with them the successes and struggles of those you are teaching as they strive to live the doctrine of Christ. Keep your records up to date using the tools provided so that your key indicator information is accurate. The key indicators are reported automatically each week based on the information recorded in Area Book Planner.

You will also account to your mission president in a weekly letter to him. Report to him on the progress of your area and on your own progress. Keep the letter brief, but feel free to be open with your comments. He is the only person who will read the letter.

Notes

1. D. Todd Christofferson, "Building Faith in Christ" (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 23, 2011), 4–5, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
2. Henry B. Eyring, "Teaching by the Spirit" (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 28, 2006), 5, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
3. Neil L. Andersen, "Missionary Purpose and the Doctrine of Christ," worldwide missionary broadcast, Jan. 20, 2016, 4.
4. M. Russell Ballard, "Return and Receive," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 62–63.
5. M. Russell Ballard, "Concluding Remarks" (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 29, 2006), 3, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
6. M. Russell Ballard, "MTC Devotional" (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 25, 2002), 6, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
7. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 107.

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